



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Valerie Fischer
Department of Public Instruction
Phone: 701.328.4138

Kim Senn
Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2356

2005 North Dakota Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results Released

BISMARCK, N.D. – Several health-related behaviors among North Dakota students in grades seven and eight have improved, according to the 2005 Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results released today by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and the North Dakota Department of Health.

“The results of the 2005 YRBS for grades seven and eight show some positive changes in behavior by our young people,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “While these trends are very encouraging, other behaviors have not improved. We know we still have work to do to help our youth make positive choices to ensure their healthy futures.”

During 2005, North Dakota students in grades seven and eight were surveyed about behaviors that lead to injuries, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, eating habits, and physical activity. The survey data are used to track risk behavior trends of youth in the state.

The 2005 North Dakota Middle School YRBS identified several behavior trends, including:

- **Improvement shown:**

- Students who never or rarely wore a seat belt when riding in a car decreased from 25 percent in 1995 to 11 percent in 2005.
- Students who smoked cigarettes on one or more of the 30 days prior to the survey decreased from 20 percent in 1995 to 9 percent in 2005.
- Students who had their first drink of alcohol, other than a few sips, before age 11 decreased from 18 percent in 1999 to 14 percent in 2005.

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@state.nd.us

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- **No improvement shown:**

- Students who were overweight increased from 10 percent in 1999 to 13 percent in 2005.
- Students who participated in regular, vigorous physical activity decreased from 80 percent in 1999 to 73 percent in 2005.
- Students who tried marijuana for the first time before age 11 remained at about 3 percent between 1999 through 2005.

Healthy North Dakota is a statewide initiative that promotes healthy behaviors. According to the initiative's spokesperson, North Dakota First Lady Mikey Hoeven, the goal of *Healthy North Dakota* is to help all North Dakotans, including young people, make healthy lifestyle choices. "I'm encouraged to see that an increasing number of our middle school students are making healthy choices when it comes to seat belt use, cigarette use, and alcohol use," Hoeven said. "But we need to keep working so that all of our children develop life-long, healthy habits. We do not want a single child to jeopardize his or her long-term health because of unfortunate choices such as smoking, drinking and the lack of adequate physical activity."

"I want to again thank the many middle schools, administrators, faculty members and students who participated in this important survey," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Wayne Sanstead. "Our goal is healthy and safe students. We will use this information to guide our department's development of statewide health and educational programs to assist school districts in expanding their curriculum to better prepare students to deal with youth risk behaviors. We know that by working together with the YRBS data, the DPI and school districts can be more effective in alerting parents and the community about the many personal challenges that our young people face growing up in today's society."

The complete results of the 2005 North Dakota Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey are available on the Department of Public Instruction website at <http://dpi.state.nd.us/health/YRBS/index.shtm>. For more information about the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, contact Valerie Fischer, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, at 701.328.4138.

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